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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MAZIE K. HIRONO, a Senator from the State of Hawaii.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our strength, rock, and fortress, we praise Your holy Name. Thank You for being our shield and stronghold.

Today, give our lawmakers the wisdom to seek You, for You deserve their trust. As our Senators remember how You have sustained our Nation in the past, may they have confidence in Your guidance for the future.

Lord, remind them of the times they cried to You for help, and You answered them through Your loving providence. As they recall that when You speak, good things happen, empower them to face whatever the future brings without fear. Use them to speak lifegiving words that bring harmony and hope.

We pray in Your marvelous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 19, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MAZIE K. HIRONO, a Senator from the State of Hawaii, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. HIRONO thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Senate returns this week with a full plate. Today, we will continue to work on two important nominations to the Justice Department: Lisa Monaco and Vanita Gupta. Both should be confirmed by the end of this week. The Senate will also vote to confirm SEC Commissioner Gary Gensler to a full term.

At the same time, the Senate will continue to work on the anti-Asian hate crimes bill. Last week, the Senate voted to proceed with the legislation by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 92 to 6. The process will continue to be bipartisan.

Senator COLLINS has worked with Senator HIRONO—you, Madam President—on a few modifications, which we have welcomed. Senators MORAN and BLUMENTHAL have worked with Senator SCOTT of Florida to incorporate his feedback into their legislation called

the NO HATE Act, which would improve and strengthen the bill.

Senator WARNOCK has worked with Senators HIRONO and COLLINS to include language acknowledging the recent tragic shootings near Atlanta.

All of these ideas will be incorporated into a broader final substitute amendment. I will ensure the Senate votes on the substitute amendment in the coming days. All told, the Senate is on track to finish this bill later this week.

We are seeing that when the Senate is given the opportunity to work, the Senate can work. Members from both sides of the aisle have worked together over the past week to consider, perfect, and—soon—enact legislation responding to a pressing issue.

Regrettably—very regrettably—in recent years, all of us have witnessed a surge of White nationalism and violent extremism in American society. Senators of good will from both sides of the aisle have taken note and developed proposals to give Federal law enforcement officials the tools to better detect, prevent, and prosecute this surge in hate crimes.

The Senate will incorporate many of these ideas in the final substitute amendment to this bill. As a result, I am optimistic we can finish our work on the anti-Asian hate crimes bill later this week in the same manner we started, with an overwhelming bipartisan vote.

And, let me say, it is needed. As I go through New York—I have been to several more rallies, one early this morning—anti-Asian hate crime, unfortunately, is on the upsurge. We hear about the violent acts. We have heard about the deaths. But, every day, thousands—thousands—of Asian Americans are subjected to smaller but nonetheless stinging acts of hate crime by being called names, by being spat upon, by being cursed at, and even just by being stared at in a nasty way like: Who the heck are you?

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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So we must act. We must act both to strengthen the Department of Justice's ability to prosecute more hate crimes and to pay attention to hate crimes and to calculate their number, but also to send a message—two messages, in fact: one to our Asian-American friends—a great 6 percent of America and 10 percent of New York is Asian American—that you are us, we are all Americans together, and we welcome you being here. I, for one, like you, Madam President, would welcome more Asian immigrants coming to America.

But second is a message to those who perpetrate these awful acts: You are not American. We despise what you do, and we are going to remain vigilant until this kind of bigotry is diminished and maybe even snuffed out.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on another matter, for the last year, the country has faced a daunting series of crises. After such a difficult year, it is important to take stock of how the country is finally, finally starting to recover.

Over a month ago, Senate Democrats passed the American Rescue Plan, supercharging our Nation's vaccination drive and putting thousands of dollars into the pockets of Americans who needed it most. Already, the benefits are pouring in.

Yesterday, the CDC announced that the country had reached a truly remarkable milestone. Over half of U.S. adults, 130 million Americans, have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. It is the result of a rapidly accelerating pace of distribution, which we in the Senate—many of us—pushed for, first in the December bill and then in the ARP bill. The country now averages over 3 million doses per day.

Even better news arrived this morning. Starting today, every single adult in the United States is eligible to get vaccinated. Let me say that again. All U.S. adults in all 50 States, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico are now eligible to get the vaccine, meeting the deadline President Biden set just 2 weeks ago.

I urge all Americans to go online, find a location where vaccines are being administered, and get the vaccine. Register, sign up, call in. Do whatever you need to do to make yourself an appointment. This is about protecting yourself and protecting your family. We are on our way to beating COVID-19, but everyone needs to do their part, and part of doing your part is being vaccinated.

Inoculating a country of 330 million people—a country the size of a continent—is a momentous task. The fact that we have already reached the halfway point in 4 short months is a credit to the Biden administration and our work here in Congress to fund vaccine production and distribution, and it is a credit to the thousands of medical re-

searchers, scientists, doctors, nurses, and all the public health workers who have made this possible.

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, our economy has gotten its own shot in the arm. The Treasury Department announced that nearly 159 million stimulus payments—\$376 billion—have reached people across the country. Last week, jobless claims fell to their lowest levels since the start of the pandemic. Global consumer confidence is now higher than it was even before the pandemic. Across the country, the American Rescue Plan is accelerating our economic recovery. Consumer spending is up, businesses are gradually reopening, and American workers are regaining hope and reentering the workforce.

Thanks to our historic investment in American workers, American families, and the American economy, brighter days are just around the corner. All of us who worked hard on passing the ARP and the previous legislation can be very proud of what we were able to do. Now, of course, we are not completely out of the woods yet. Despite the roaring success of the American Rescue Plan, we must continue to bolster our economic recovery and create good-paying jobs for American workers. That is why infrastructure—big, bold infrastructure—remains at the top of our priority list.

There isn't a community in this country without some glaring infrastructure challenges, be they crumbling roads, bridges, or school buildings, aging sewer systems, housing properties, or unreliable internet. If America is going to compete in the 21st century, we can't have an infrastructure that is stuck in the last century, so Congress, in coordination with the Biden administration, is going to work on a comprehensive jobs and infrastructure bill this year.

Today at the White House, President Biden will meet with Members from both parties to continue bipartisan discussions on an infrastructure package. The President has reiterated his intention and desire to work in good faith with our Republican colleagues. Hopefully, our Republican colleagues share that willingness and desire. Reliably investing in our Nation's infrastructure used to unite our two parties. It can do so again.

Here in Congress, we are going to start getting our teeth into the details of an infrastructure package. Right here in the Senate, there are numerous activities going on this week. Tomorrow, the Senate Appropriations Committee will hear from four Cabinet-level officials on the details of the American Jobs Plan: Secretaries Buttigieg, Raimondo, and Fudge, as well as EPA Administrator Michael Regan. Later in the week, the Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee will hear from Secretaries Buttigieg and Raimondo on the President's Build Back Better agenda, and the Democratic caucus will meet with

the Director of the National Economic Council, Brian Deese, on the same subject.

As the Senate begins to shape the contours of a comprehensive infrastructure bill, I will soon move to have the Senate take up a bipartisan water infrastructure bill. This legislation, the Drinking Water and Infrastructure Act, was advanced by the Environment and Public Works Committee on a unanimous vote earlier this year. It will authorize tens of billions of dollars to make sure American families, especially low-income families, have access to safe and clean drinking water.

The drinking water bill could represent a small but important first step in bringing our two parties together on the work on infrastructure. I salute the chairman of EPW, TOM CARPER of Delaware, and the ranking member, Senator CAPITO of West Virginia, for coming together on the legislation. We look forward to working with our Republican colleagues later this work period to get that piece of legislation done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

COVID-19 HATE CRIMES ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 937, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 937) to facilitate the expedited review of COVID-19 hate crimes, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 1445

(Purpose: To improve the bill.)

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I have an amendment at the desk, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] for Ms. HIRONO and Ms. COLLINS proposes an amendment numbered 1445.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask to dispense with further reading of the amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.